

In the claims:

- a.
1. (Currently Amended) A computerized method comprising:  
enrolling a customer in a messaging and alert service;  
storing a list of businesses selected by the customer;  
storing a customer contact hierarchy list including ranked customer contact information; and  
contacting the customer according to the customer contact hierarchy including ranked customer contact information when at least one of the selected businesses has an alert for the customer.
  2. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein a customer enrolls by providing information to at least one of a participating business website, a customer messaging and alert service website, and to a customer services representative.
  3. (Original) The method of claim 2 wherein the customer contact hierarchy list includes at least one of telephone information, instant messaging information, e-mail information, pager information and wireless device information.
  4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising storing a list of customer preferences that include at least one of selected businesses to contact, selected businesses authorized to send alert messages, when the customer may be contacted and ~~types of~~ messages that require confirmation.
  5. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising permitting the customer to contact any of the selected businesses.
  6. (Original) The method of claim 5 wherein the customer submits a natural language query that is interpreted by the messaging and alert service.

7. (Currently Amended) An article comprising a computer-readable medium that stores computer executable instructions for a messaging and alerting system, the instructions causing a computer to:

enroll a customer in the messaging and alert service;

store a list of businesses selected by the customer;

store a customer contact hierarchy list including ranked customer contact information; and

contact the customer according to the customer contact hierarchy including ranked customer contact information when at least one of the selected businesses has an alert for the customer.

8. (Original) The article of claim 7, the instructions further causing a computer to enroll a customer by requiring the customer to provide information to at least one of a participating business website, a customer messaging and alert service website, and to a customer services representative.


9. (Original) The article of claim 8, the instructions further causing a computer to store data pertaining to the customer contact hierarchy list that includes at least one of telephone information, instant messaging information, pager information and wireless device information.

10. (Currently Amended) The article of claim 7, the instructions further causing a computer to store data pertaining to a list of customer preferences that include at least one of selected businesses to contact, selected businesses authorized to send alert messages, when the customer may be contacted and ~~types of~~ messages that require confirmation.

11. (Original) The article of claim 7, the instructions further causing a computer to permit the customer to contact any of the selected businesses.

12. (Original) The article of claim 7, the instructions further causing a computer to interpret a natural language query submitted by the customer.

13. (Currently Amended) A computerized method comprising:  
providing a customer messaging and alert service (CMAS) for use by customers;  
permitting a customer to enroll in the CMAS and to authorize at least one  
business, selected from a group of affiliated businesses, to contact the customer;  
permitting the customer to specify a contact hierarchy list ~~of communication types~~  
including ranked customer contact information;  
monitoring the chosen businesses with a CMAS engine; and  
alerting the customer when an authorized business has a message by attempting to  
contact the customer according to that customer's hierarchy list of ranked customer contact  
information.

 14. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, wherein the ~~communication types~~  
ranked customer contact information include at least one of instant messaging, e-mail, telephone  
service, short-messaging system messages, wireless calls, and voice messaging.

15. (Original) The method of claim 13, further comprising contacting a business that sent  
an alert when the customer acknowledges receipt of the alert.

16. (Original) The method of claim 13 further comprising permitting the customer to  
contact any of the affiliated businesses.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16 wherein the customer submits a natural language  
query that is interpreted by the CMAS.


18. (Original) The method of claim 17 wherein CMAS utilizes at least one dataset of  
customer intent data to interpret the natural language query .

19. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein the customer intent data is enterprise  
specific.

20. (Original) The method of claim 17 further comprising tracking the natural language queries.

21. (Original) The method of claim 13 wherein a customer enrolls by providing information to at least one of a participating business website, a customer messaging and alert service website, and to a customer services representative.

22. (Original) The method of claim 13 wherein the customer contact hierarchy list includes at least one of telephone information, instant messaging information, e-mail information, pager information and wireless device information.

 23. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13 further comprising storing a list of customer preferences that include at least one of selected businesses to contact, selected businesses authorized to send alert messages, when the customer may be contacted and ~~types of~~ messages that require confirmation.

24. (Original) The method of claim 13 further comprising generating reports for use by the affiliated businesses.

25. (Original) The method of claim 24 wherein the reports include at least one of completed transaction summaries, peak number of transactions by channel, transaction failure by channel, transaction frequency by channel, and customer intent, transaction summary by customer intent and channel, and transaction failure by customer intent.

26. (Currently Amended) An article comprising a computer-readable medium that stores computer executable instructions for a customer messaging and alerting system, the instructions causing a computer to:

offer a customer messaging and alert service (CMAS) for use by customers;

permit a customer to enroll in the CMAS and to authorize at least one business, selected from a group of affiliated businesses, to contact the customer;

permit the customer to specify a contact hierarchy list ~~of communication types~~ including ranked customer contact information;

monitor the chosen businesses with a CMAS engine; and

alert the customer when an authorized business has a message by attempting to contact the customer according to that customer's hierarchy list including ranked customer contact information.

27. (Original) The article of claim 26, the instructions further causing a computer to respond to communications data in the form of at least one of instant messages, e-mail, telephone calls, short-messaging system messages, wireless calls, and voice messages.

28. (Original) The article of claim 26, the instructions further causing a computer to contact a business that sent an alert when the customer acknowledges receipt of the alert.

29. (Original) The article of claim 26, the instructions further causing a computer to permit the customer to contact any of the affiliated businesses.

30. (Original) The article of claim 29, the instructions further causing a computer to interpret a natural language query submitted by the customer.

31. (Original) The article of claim 30, the instructions further causing a computer to utilize at least one dataset of customer intent data to interpret the natural language query.

32. (Original) The article of claim 31, the instructions further causing a computer to utilize enterprise specific customer intent data.

33. (Original) The article of claim 30, the instructions further causing a computer to track the natural language queries.

34. (Original) The article of claim 26, the instructions further causing a computer to enroll a customer when information is provided to at least one of a participating business website, a customer messaging and alert service website, and to a customer services representative.

35. (Original) The article of claim 26, the instructions further causing a computer to store customer contact hierarchy data that includes at least one of telephone information, instant messaging information, e-mail information, pager information and wireless device information.

36. (Currently Amended) The article ~~method~~ of claim 26 further comprising storing a list of customer preferences that include at least one of selected businesses to contact, selected businesses authorized to send alert messages, when the customer may be contacted and types of messages that require confirmation.

AI 37. (Original) The article of claim 26, the instructions further causing a computer to generate reports for use by the affiliated businesses.

38. (Original) The article of claim 37, the instructions further causing a computer to generate reports that include at least one of completed transaction summaries, peak number of transactions by channel, transaction failure by channel, transaction frequency by channel, and customer intent, transaction summary by customer intent and channel, and transaction failure by customer intent.

39. (Currently Amended) A computerized method comprising:  
enrolling in a customer messaging and alert service that includes a plurality of businesses;  
forming a query for a business;  
receiving a response from the business; ~~and~~  
receiving alert messages from at least one business; and

alerting a customer of the alert messages according to a customer's hierarchy list including ranked customer contact information.

40. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 39 wherein enrolling includes at least one of selecting those businesses that are authorized for responding to queries, selecting those businesses authorized to send alert messages, generating a the contact hierarchy list, and specifying preferences.

41. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 40 wherein the list of preferences includes at least one of when communications can be initiated, and ~~the types of~~ messages that require confirmation.

42. (Original) The method of claim 40 wherein the contact hierarchy list includes at least one of telephone information, instant messaging information, pager information and wireless device information.

43. (Original) The method of claim 39 wherein enrolling includes providing information to at least one of a participating business website, a customer messaging and alert service website, and to a customer services representative.

44. (Original) The method of claim 39 wherein forming a query comprises submitting a natural language query that is interpreted by the messaging and alert service.

45. (Currently Amended) An article comprising a computer-readable medium that stores computer executable instructions for a messaging and alerting system, the instructions permitting a customer to:

enroll in a customer messaging and alert service that includes a plurality of businesses;

form a query for a business;

receive a response from the business; and

receive alert messages from at least one business; and  
alert the customer of the alert message according to a customer's hierarchy list  
including ranked customer contact information.

46. (Currently Amended) The article of claim 45, the instructions further enabling the customer to select at least one of those businesses that are authorized for responding to queries, those businesses authorized to send alert messages, ~~the types of~~ contact devices suitable for communication and preferences.

47. (Currently Amended) The article of claim 46, the instructions further causing storing of customer preferences that include at least one of when communications can be initiated, and ~~the types of~~ messages that require confirmation.

48. (Currently Amended) The article of claim 46, the instructions further causing storing f at least one of customer telephone information, instant messaging information, pager information and wireless device information in a the customer contact hierarchy list.

49. (Original) The article of claim 45, the instructions further enabling the customer to enroll by providing information to at least one of a participating business website, a customer messaging and alert service website, and to a customer services representative.

50. (Original) The article of claim 45, the instructions further enabling the customer to submit a natural language query that is interpreted by the messaging and alert service.

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51 – 63 (Withdrawn)

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